

Statement on the Death of Billy Jack Gaither

March 5, 1999

I share with many Americans a sense of grief and outrage at the tragic and violent death of Billy Jack Gaither in Alabama. This heinous and cowardly crime touches the conscience of our country, just as the terrible murders of James Byrd in Texas and Matthew Shepard in Wyoming did last year.

In times like this, the American people pull together and speak with one voice, because the acts of hatred that led to the deaths of such innocent men are also acts of defiance against the values our society holds most dear.

That is why I will continue to work for passage of the "Hate Crimes Prevention Act," which can empower the Federal Government, working with local authorities, to do even more to deter, investigate, and help prosecute crimes of hatred. The legislation would remove needless jurisdictional requirements and give the Department of Justice the power to prosecute hate crimes committed because of the victim's sexual orientation, gender, or disability.

Laws represent values that we as a society cherish, and among those values is a belief that intolerance is un-American. And intolerance, left unchallenged, can inspire evil deeds that threaten the very fabric of this great country. All Americans deserve protection from hate. Nothing is more important to our country's future than our standing together against intolerance, prejudice, and violent bigotry. Congress can give power to such shared values by passing the "Hate Crimes Prevention Act." In so doing, all Americans can be made more safe and secure.

Hillary and I offer our prayers for the family and friends of Mr. Gaither, and our hope that their love for him, together with God's grace, will carry them through these trying times.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

February 27

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Park City, UT.

March 1

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

March 3

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Newark, NJ, and in the evening, he returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate David B. Sandalow to be Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environment and Scientific Affairs at the State Department.

The President announced his intention to nominate John D. Holum to be Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security at the State Department.

The President announced his intention to nominate Richard M. McGahey to be Assistant Secretary for the Pension and Welfare Benefits Administration at the Labor Department.

March 4

The President announced his intention to nominate Kelly H. Carnes to be Assistant Secretary for Technology Policy at the Commerce Department.

The President announced his intention to appoint Kenneth H. (Buddy) MacKay as Special Envoy of the President and Secretary of State for the Americas.

March 5

The President announced his intention to nominate Bill Lann Lee to be Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division at the Justice Department.